



NEWSLETTER

of Tools For Solidarity

Give a new life to your old tools!

TOOLS FOR SOLIDARITY



Newsletter
December 2013

Tools For Solidarity

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*The views in this newsletter are not
necessarily the views of Tools For
Solidarity*

Current TFS volunteers

All the people currently
working in Tools For Solidarity

Francesca (Italy), Sofia (Portugal), Oskar (Germany), Oliver (Germany), Rubén (Spain), Anna (Spain), Sarah (France), Boglárka (Hungary), Giulia (Italy), Laura (Spain), Christy, Conor, Stephen, John, Peter, Thierry, Liam, Larry, David, Conor, Daniel, Larry, Peter, Victoria, Cristina, Jim, Sam, William, Anthony, Nancy, Louis.

Thanks!!



Working together on the Shipment

Filling a container is a special moment for all the volunteers, not only because of the hard work involved. It's during these days that you get to see the work of a whole year. All the different activities carried on by the volunteers from building the boxes to refurbishing the sewing machines come together in a 20 foot container.

On October the 24th 2013, TFS sent its 8th container to the Mwanza Sewing and Training Centre in Tanzania. This was the latest of nine containers – one went to Uganda - to be sent out to our partners.



The container left Belfast with 370 sewing machines, including knitting machines and a leather working machine.

Unlike the previous ones this shipment has been decided and planned in a very short time. At the beginning of July TFS has been hit by the news that a fire burn down the MSTC workshop in Tanzania. Most of the stock of sewing machines and all the workshop equipment were lost in one night. After

the shock TFS decided to supply MSTC with another container of sewing machines and equipment to fit out the workshop that in the meanwhile has been rebuilt. This will enable the centre to continue to provide sewing machines and deliver the training that has already been scheduled.

none of this would have been possible without the work of all the volunteers who put all their energy and effort in getting everything ready on time.

MSTC has been operating for 6 years with the support of TFS. Ac-



In four month the volunteers working in TFS workshops in Belfast, Downpatrick and Camphill Community in Mourne Grange prepared and organised the items needed for the shipment.

The container was filled in Belfast during four days of hard work under pouring rain. It is expected to arrive in Mwanza by the end of December.

knowledging the value of MSTC work in supporting tailors and artisans in the lake districts of Tanzania, TFS is now looking to renovate the partnership with the centre.

With MSTC and another project hopefully starting next year where will container n° 10 be sent to?



Francesca

Once again



Handover at TFS!!!

September and October have been the months of changes in the life of Tools For Solidarity: Brodie, Mirco, Ricardo, Martin, Camille and Pablo finished their voluntary service and came home... Goodbye guys and many thanks for your work, it was our pleasure to meet you!! But some new volunteers arrived in Belfast: Giulia from Italy, Sarah from France, Oskar from Germany, Anna from Spain, Boglárka from Hungary, Christie from Scotland and Conor, Christina, Victoria, Terri from Belfast. Also Francesca from Italy, and Laura from Spain, decided to stay with us although they have already finished their EVS.

Each of us applied for TFS with different goals and expectations: to improve English, to learn new skills, to discover Belfast and Northern Ireland,... but of course, the life here is much more (than this)! During this year, we can experiment with life with people from different countries and culture, the work in the workshop and the philosophy of TFS. The first impression of the new life in Belfast is positive for everybody... certainly, you have to get used to the weather and the cold, that is not so easy for people from the south of Europe!!! But the welcome from the other volunteers has been very warm and it has made the adaptation to the new circumstances easier. Now Sarah, Boglárka and Anna are working on sewing machines, while Oskar, Giulia, Christie, Christina, Terri and Victoria are all working with tools. Conor is never seen in the workshop cause he is scared of hard work and the cold! It is sometimes difficult, because none of us have previous experiences in this field: hammers, treadles, industrial sewing machines... at the begin-



ning everything is completely new and unknown! Fortunately, John is very patient with us and we can learn a lot from him and from the other volunteers! And it is a challenging work, every day we learn some new things and gain a lot of new skills. Moreover, everyone is very enthusiastic and motivated in supporting the projects of TFS for Tanzania and

Uganda. We are so glad to be involved in such a great team for such a great purpose!

Special thanks to Peter, Liam, Larry, Conor, Daniel and David for continuing to put up with us when we keep saying - 'sorry, can you say that again' as we struggle with the local dialect! Thanks to Thomas and Jordan for all their help while they were here. we wish them good luck for the future.



So... stay tuned to hear about the further adventures of the TFS volunteers in Belfast!



Boglárka and Giulia



The ESD project goes from strength to strength

As you probably remember in June 2013 Tools For Solidarity (TFS) Education for Sustainable Development group (ESD) started its educational programme with the John Paul II Youth Club. (<http://www.toolsforsolidarity.com/2013/08/20/education-for-sustainable-development-in-john-paul-ii-youth-club/>)

With the onset of the new academic year there are new opportunities for the ESD project. The first groups to be part of the scholar calendar 2013-2014 that we have been working with are the Loughshore Educational Resource Center and the Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain Irish Primary School.

Loughshore Educational Resource Center was a big challenge for us because we worked with six teenagers with behavioural disorders. Nevertheless it was very rewarding that students were able to reflect on aspects of life such as living without electricity, the distribution of the wealth in the world, or the impact of our actions on a global scale (for example the relationship between having mobile phones and the mineral exploitation in Congo). On top of that, the feedback from the teachers and the teenagers was extremely useful for adjusting the activities to the characteristics of the group.

We have been preparing practical sessions which will allow the students to put into practice some of the knowledge acquired during



the educative sessions. These sessions will also allow the group to learn how to use some tools. Some ideas have been suggested however we are awaiting the decision of the students as to what they would like to focus on.

The Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain Irish Primary School: we are working with a very motivated and participative group of 18 children aged between 10 and 11 years. It has been a real pleasure to work with children who are so enthusiastic and happy to learn. We also have been very welcomed by the head and staff of the school who gave us absolute freedom to plan and develop the activities.

Looking ahead new groups are going to take part in the programme from January 2014, Some of them are:

- Park Lodge Primary School, Belfast
- Rutledge Recruitment and Training, Belfast

- Ardmore House Special School, Downpatrick
- Drumlins Integrated Primary School, Ballynahinch. The ESD will take part on the Extracurricular activities

All the members of the group are looking forward to starting with all these groups and develop new dynamics and activities, which we expect to be as successful as the previous ones.

To conclude, the ESD group is very proud of the ongoing activities and at this period we are looking for funding to support and expand the project. Therefore, we invite all the schools and groups interested to contact Laura Río Fernández, the main coordinator of the ESD, to make an appointment and to speak about the details of the programme.



Laura and Sofia

Cooking in Tools For Solidarity

Cooking in the workshop of Tools for Solidarity isn't always an easy task although it's an activity that you can learn from and enjoy. Normally we cook for a lot of people which can sometimes be stressful, but not always. The experience of cooking for the group teaches us about the values of sustainability and solidarity: for example we try to cook without spending too much money and to reuse the food from the day before. There is no better acknowledgment or appreciation of the value of our colleagues' work than a freshly prepared meal.

John doesn't like salad. He thinks the salad is for the rabbits

However, it isn't straightforward to cook in Tools for Solidarity because the first rule that we adhere to is a vegetarian diet. For many people from Mediterranean countries it can be

this means we cook wheat free for instance. This means we sometimes use special pasta or serve rice as a substitute and spuds are always well received.

Tools for Solidarity is an organisation that works with volunteers from different



parts of Europe, sometimes even further afield, so it's an enjoyable and worthwhile experience to taste the different cuisines from countries of our volunteers. It also affords each of us the

"Lentil soup" from Stephen, the nice burgers from John, the exquisite food from Camille "Viva le France," the meals cooked in the oven from Sofia, the creative lunches from Laura, the simple food from Oliver and Francesca, the delicious risotto from Oskar and the tasty curry from Martin. The list of dishes from our Chefs is endless.

Conor can't resist the biscuits. Between tea breaks, he can't avoid going to the kitchen and steal one

We have been gathering favourite recipes from previous volunteers. We hope to put these into our cookbook which appears on our website and into a cookbook that Geoff from Mourne Grange is compiling as a fundraising tool to let start up a new tools group. So if you can help with a recipe we would love to hear from you - though we would love to hear from you anyway!

One day Anna cooked rice with the rice cooker. We had to eat it for 4 days in a row!

Sometimes we make mistakes like undercooked rice, burnt pasta or overseasoned stew but even with our mistakes we enjoyed a tasty lunch and learn as we go. Finally all that is left to say is enjoy the meal, guten appetit, bon appétit, bon appetito, jó étvágyat, buen provecho, bon profit.



difficult as we are often used to cooking with meat or fish - fortunately we can use tasty meat substitutes in our recipes. Another challenge in ensuring that the special dietary requirements of the group are tended to - sometimes

opportunity to learn new recipes and try to be creative when we cook.

We can enthuse about the different plates like the legendary





Income Generation for Artisans in Eastern Uganda: WORI Project

The aim of the project is to increase the income generation of artisans in Busoga region, East Uganda, through the provision of high quality tools, sewing machines and training orchestrated by our partner, the Women's Right Initiative (WORI).

In May 2013 Tools For Solidarity (TFS) conducted a pilot project with WORI to provide a small number of sewing machines and training to women. The project was set up following a request by WORI to establish a partnership and a subsequent visit by TFS in May 2011. The project was very successful and encouraged both parties to pursue a more comprehensive and dynamic programme. Following negotiations TFS and WORI have agreed to work on a 3 year project to improve income generation for artisans within the Busoga region with a particular focus on women. The project is based on the successful model of the MSTC but will also incorporate the provision of hand tools.



WORI have conducted a survey in which tailors and artisans, within the area of the proposed project, were asked what sort of project they want/need and the response has been very clear

- Access to high quality tools and machines at affordable prices.
- Training to help them maintain the tools and machines.
- Help in learning new skills.

The report also highlighted the successes and outcomes derived from tailors who received machines in the pilot project:

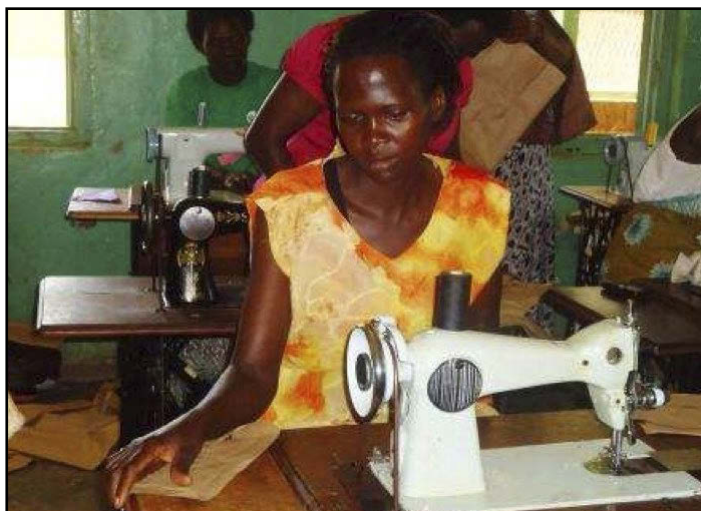
‘In an interview with one of our artisans Lwesibawa Musa he said, “I can now make 400,000 per month from 150,000 UGX invested using the industrial machine I acquired.”

The project proposed is to open a tools and sewing training centre where artisans can purchase high quality refurbished tools and sewing machines coupled with training and technical backup that will enable them to look after and utilise the tools to their optimum potential. The centre will look to support local treadle production and to provide marketing and product designs through training courses and a library of information available to the artisans. The income generated will be used to pay staff in Uganda, provide free training (accommodation and food), train mechanics within the region, purchase locally made treadles and enable the project to be self financing after 3 years.



Delivery of Project

In order to make the project meets its desired outcomes of enabling artisans to generate more income and ensure sustainability through the tools/machines providing long term use - technical backup and support is critical. The project will target women and people from rural areas who face more difficulties in accessing support for their businesses. There will be a process of assessment and selection so that people can be identified and receive the right support. This will be done through district officials who have information on all small artisan groups established in their area. Working with tailoring associations and women's organisations will also help advertise the project.



Skills will be transferred from TFS personnel to enable people to carry out technical as well as managerial tasks. A system of reporting and monitoring will be established to help identify any issues or problems that may arise and take the appropriate action.

Many challenges lie ahead but we look forward to working with WORI to help support artisans and tradespeople in Busoga, to improve their skills and livelihoods.





Out of The Workshop

Although our TFS Team really like spending its time at the workshop, time by time we also snatch the chance to take part in some exciting events. Besides others, we took part in a Christmas Fair, represented TFS in the famous Titanic Belfast, and we appeared at the Volunteer Fair.

On the 1st of October Tools participated in a Volunteer Fair promoted by the Youth Council For Northern Ireland (YCNI) which took place in the Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC). This fair was attended by approximately 50 organisations that were organized by stands which provided information about them in order to collect more volunteers. The main aim of our participation at the event was to promote and give information about European Voluntary Service (EVS) to the BMC students. In this sense, some EVS and ex-EVS from different organisations of Northern Ireland set up a stand where we shared our experiences as a volunteer abroad and clarified some doubts related to the application process. We hope that we have triggered the young people of Northern Ireland to dare to be an EVS!



The Co-operative Group is celebrating its 150th anniversary of providing several services in the United Kingdom this year and because of this they held a festive gathering in Titanic Belfast on the first day of December. One of the purposes of the event was to show what kind of movements and organisations have been supported by the membership. As a supported organisation, we also appeared with an informative stall in the Titanic Museum. It was a memorable experience because quite a lot of people were interested in our work.

During the celebration more people made speeches. For instance, Erskine Holmes, a long-time friend of Tools, spoke on the development of the Co-operative Movement in Northern Ireland and mentioned the first ever Co-op in Belfast started in John's Street in 1830. Moreover, Polyp, a great cartoonist, told about a graphic novel that he has produced on the founding of the co-operative movement.



Two old friends of Tools, Pam and Tara invited us to take part in the splendid Christmas Fair in the middle of November. The visitors could pick from plenty of special hand-made goods by local designers. TFS also had a stall there - we sold some useful and refurbished tools, nice toys and remarkable paintings for everybody who took a look at our colourful collection. In the end the enthusiastic TFS Team raised nearly £100 and raised awareness of our work, as well.



One day, if you are lucky, you might also catch the friendly TFS Team at an interesting event in Belfast!



Fire destroys the MSTC

During the night of the 9th July an electrical fault in a coffee roasting business in the same building as the MSTC started a fire which quickly spread to the roof. The flames spread along the rafters - there was no partition to stop this - and soon the whole building was ablaze. Despite the fact that the alarm was raised early and people flocked to help there was little that could be done to put out the fire.

The impact of the fire was devastating, as can be seen by the pictures. Very little remained that could be salvaged. Even worse was the news that the MSTC staff had recently moved hundreds of machines into the workshop in preparation for delivery and training programmes - nearly 400 machines were destroyed along with all the workshop and office equipment. Most of the records were also lost. Thankfully nobody was hurt by the fire.



The news of the fire was heartbreaking for all of us at TFS, MSTC and SIDO. Damian, the SIDO regional manager, was moved to tears at the sight of the destruction and Jane, Christina and Athumen were shocked and stunned by what had happened. So much work and energy from so many people to create something very special and unique turned to ashes within a few hours.

At first we were paralysed by the news - how could this happen, was it really an accident, how and what should we do, would it be possible to start again? It became clear very quickly that the fire was accidental - the coffee business, which was the source of the fire was completely destroyed as well. The staff at the MSTC despite their feelings of despair got straight to work to salvage what they could and started to plan how to go forward. MSTC had still more than 100 machines in storage in a container.



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At TFS we too discussed what we could do and there was very clear agreement that the MSTC was too precious to lose - the MSTC is not just the workshop and the office but most importantly it is the workers. They have all dedicated themselves to making MSTC a success and had gained invaluable levels of skills and experience for supporting the local tailoring sector. It would have been a disservice to them and to the artisans not to continue to support them.

News of the fire was sent to our volunteers around the world, to friends of tools and the many organisations and groups that have supported us throughout the years. The response was phenomenal - with emails of support and many, many offers to help. Linda, director of War on Want NI offered us the use of their shops throughout NI to help us collect sewing machines, John Coghlan from Disability Aid Abroad helped with fundraising, Debbie and the workers of the Manchester Unicorn Food Co-op sent us a generous donation. These



are just a few of the people and organisations that rallied round to support us in rebuilding the MSTC. Many thanks from all of us at TFS, MSTC and SIDO for believing in what we do and supporting us through the hard times.

The Phoenix Arises

Work to rebuild the centre started within a few weeks of the fire. Damian did an amazing job to sort out all of the legal and technical issues. Soon we had pictures of the new improved MSTC building on the same site but this time with roof partitions!

We began planning an emergency shipment as the remaining stock of sewing machines would not enable the MSTC to operate for more than several months and of course the workshop would need to be re-equipped with tools and machinery. Our volunteers were fantastic in responding to the need and prepared a shipment in record time - the container left the workshop on the 24th October with more than 300 sewing machines inside along with all the items needed to furnish the workshop and office. Thanks to NIPSA for meeting the cost of the shipment and for Carson and All Route-Shipping helping with the cost.



Meanwhile the MSTC and SIDO staff were extremely busy - the workshop was reopened in September and operating at full speed in October. In this month 54 tailors received training, 26 in embroidery and 28 in design - a record number for one month! They also managed to provide 50 machines to tailors from all 6 regions of the Lake Zone.

In November the staff of MSTC took a well earned and well timed holiday - the container we sent will not arrive until the middle of December. At TFS we have been receiving phone calls galore offering us sewing machines after the Belfast City Council put out an appeal for machines on our behalf. In the last month we have collected more than 100 machines thanks to this appeal and the campaign with War on Want NI.



The work of the MSTC is invaluable in supporting local tailors, their businesses, communities and families. TFS is extremely proud of what a small volunteer led development organisation in co-operation with our partner SIDO in Tanzania has been able to achieve. The response to the fire by volunteers, friends, supporters and all the people in Tanzania in the MSTC has been amazing and represents the true spirit of Solidarity.



Stephen

TFS in the community

Question: How many nationalities does it take to change a bobbin?

Answer: Six (Iranian, Iraqi, Irish, Nigerian, Spanish and Togan) – but they got there eventually!



Florence Izedonmwon, working on a bag with help from tutor Niamh Scullion

After weeks of effort, everyone in the Sewing Machine Skills class in Falls Women's Centre can thread a machine from scratch and they are now sewing bags and cushions, altering clothes and even making bunting (should we place an order for the 30th birthday party next year?)

Thanks to Tools a whole new group of women in Belfast are learning how to use a sewing machine, and use it with confidence. They are women who have faced many difficulties in life – some are asylum-seekers, others are dealing with mental health problems or living in hostel accommodation. They have joined the sewing machine skills class in Falls Women's

Centre for different reasons, including gaining a qualification, but most of them enjoy the chance to meet other people and learn a very practical skill. Here are some of their comments about the class:

"When I was a wee girl we were very poor and my mum taught me how to use the machine for things like sewing sheets – side to side when they're worn in the middle. It was a treadle machine. Now I'm recovering from a depressive illness and it gives me great joy to regain a skill I had as a child. Sewing makes me very happy and it gives me hope for the future – maybe I can even earn a living from it."

"I like coming to this class because I can speak English with people, and I need to practise. But also I used to work on the sewing machine with my Mum in Iraq, and I've forgotten how to do it. So now I'm learning again."

"I've never sewn in my life! So I thought I would come to this class and learn how to sew. Now I can thread a sewing machine, set it up and work away. Right now I'm making something for my grandchild."

In return for a donation TFS repaired and provided ten sewing machines for the class – modern "white" machines which would not be sent to Africa because they break too easily and replacement parts wouldn't be available there. The lovely Camille (EVS volunteer who left in October) came to our centre to look over the machines before the class started in September.

This is a new venture for Falls Women's Centre, which could develop in all sorts of ways – for example by bringing the development education group to our centre, raising awareness and hopefully getting more local people involved in supporting Tools. At the moment the class is led by a tutor who is taking the women through the OCN Certificate (another new aspect, unique to our centre and something which could be applied in other areas of Tools work), but TFS have agreed that next year Fabiana – arriving from Italy in January, can bring her teaching experience to the group.

Thanks and appreciation to John and the sewing team for being so supportive, working overtime to get the machines ready and offering ongoing support. You have brought something really special to Falls Women's Centre – long may it continue!



Nancy



Anne Webb and Irene McSorley stitching party bunting



Tools For Solidarity wants to wish
you a Merry christmas and a Happy
New Year 2014!!



Sláinte!!



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